

# Preventing Softball Injuries

## Safety tips for softball

### *Good preparation is important*

- ◆ Undertake a good stretching program before and after play and a comprehensive conditioning program to develop flexibility, endurance and strength.

### *Good technique and practices will help prevent overuse injury*

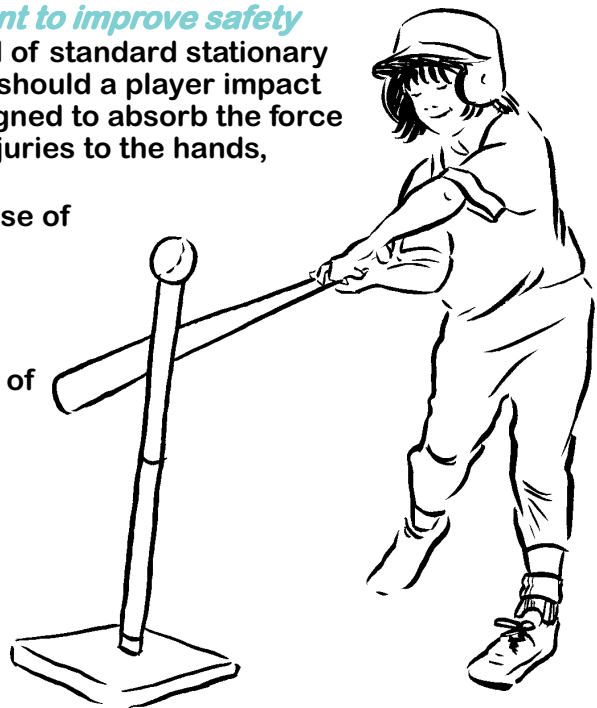
- ◆ Coaches should conduct pre-season stretching/strengthening programs; evaluate and correct pitching and throwing techniques; limit the number of pitches thrown and by an individual player; and limit the number of throws from a fielder over a period of time.

### *Wear appropriate safety equipment*

- ◆ Wear good quality, double ear helmets to protect the ear and temple region against ball impact.
- ◆ Wear energy absorbing chest padding when catching to distribute any blows from a softball impact over a broad area of the chest. Catchers should also wear a helmet with full face and throat protection.
- ◆ Wear mouthguards to prevent dental injuries.
- ◆ Youth players, aged less than 19, should wear shin and knee protection.

### *Modify playing environments and equipment to improve safety*

- ◆ Use breakaway/quick release bases instead of standard stationary bases to reduce the load impact generated should a player impact with the base. Standard bases are not designed to absorb the force of a sliding player and can cause serious injuries to the hands, ankles and feet upon impact.
- ◆ An American study has estimated that the use of break-away bases could represent a 96% reduction in the risk of injury involved with sliding.
- ◆ As ball impact, particularly to the head, is a severe and frequent cause of injury the use of softer balls is recommended.
- ◆ Pad fences, walls and posts to help prevent injury if players run in to them when attempting to catch the ball.



### *Modify rules for children*

- ◆ Encourage children to play TeeBall as a means of developing good technique.
- ◆ Older children should participate in modified softball as promoted by Aussie Sport and the Australian Softball Federation.

### *Other safety tips*

- ◆ Use protective screening to protect players in dugouts and on benches.
- ◆ Ensure playing fields and facilities are well maintained.

### *If an injury occurs*

- ◆ Ensure all injured softballers receive adequate treatment and full rehabilitation before resuming play.
- ◆ Ensure your coach is aware of all treatment and rehabilitation being undertaken for any injuries sustained.

#### *For further information contact:*

- Victorian Softball Association. PO Box 738, Cranbourne, Vic, 3977. Ph: (03) 9360 0817.
- Accident Research Centre, Monash University. Bld. 70, Wellington Rd, Clayton, Vic. 3168. Ph: (03) 9905 1808.

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## Facts on softball injuries

### *How many players?*

- ◆ In 1993 there were over 60,000 players formally registered with the Australian Softball Federation. In addition, it is estimated that a further 150,000 Australians participate in recreational softball annually.
- ◆ In Australia softball is predominantly played by women.

### *How many injuries?*

- ◆ Softball injuries rank 13th (for children) and 16th (for adults) in terms of sport and recreation injury presentations to Australian hospital emergency departments.

### *Who is injured?*

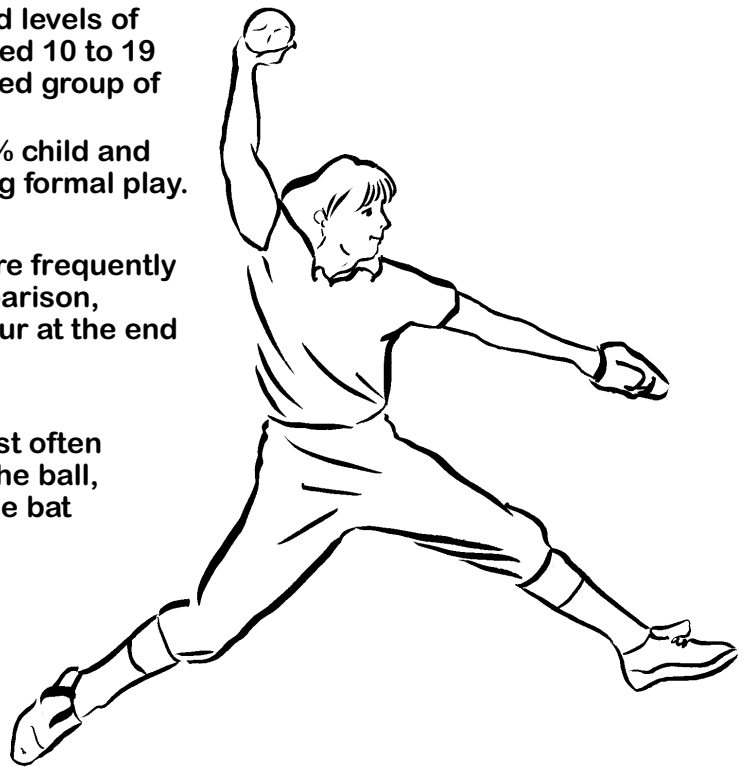
- ◆ Although softballers of all ages and levels of experience are injured, females aged 10 to 19 years are the most commonly injured group of softballers in Australia.
- ◆ Of those injuries to softballers, 43% child and 81% of adult cases occurred during formal play.

### *When do injuries occur?*

- ◆ In Victoria, child injuries occur more frequently at the start of the season. In comparison, almost half of all adult injuries occur at the end of the season.

### *The cause and type of injuries*

- ◆ Softball injuries to children are most often associated with falls, being hit by the ball, misjudging catches, being hit by the bat and over-exerting.
- ◆ Softball injuries to adults are most often associated with running between bases, particularly involving sliding to base and over-exerting while running between bases. Impact with standard stationary bases while sliding to base is the cause of serious hand, ankle and feet injuries.
- ◆ Other injuries to adults relate to catching the ball and being hit by the ball.
- ◆ Injuries to child softballers are predominantly to the fingers, and are mostly fractures and strains/sprains. Radius/ulna fractures and ankle strains/sprains are also common.
- ◆ Injuries to adult softballers are mostly strains/sprains to the ankle, knee or finger.



### *References*

Finch C, Valuri G. Pitching injury prevention to baseballers and softballers: a review of the literature. Monash University Accident Research Centre. Report No 106. November 1996.

### *Acknowledgments*

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